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ABSTRACT

To help Education Consolidation and Improvement Act Chapter 1 personnel work more effectively with test publishers, a survey was conducted of selected publishers of norm-referenced tests commonly used by Chapter 1 Local Educational Agencies (LEAs). The test publishers included: (1) CTB/McGraw-Hill; (2) The Psychological Corporation; (3) the Riverside Publishing Company; and (4) Science Research Associates, Inc. The survey focused on services publishers provide LEAs in: (1) selecting tests and appropriate scoring services; (2) minimizing turnaround time; (3) verifying scoring reports; (4) using test results for instructional planning; and (5) coping with unexpected problems. Survey results are reported in a 19-item question-and-answer format and are grouped by the above topics. It is possible to identify similarities and differences in publishers' practices. (SLD)

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SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT WORKING WITH TEST PUBLISHERS for CHAPTER 1 STAFF

prepared by

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Region 3
ECIA CHAPTER 1 EVALUATION
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INTRODUCTION

In response to requests received from Chapter 1 staff for information on how Local Education Agency (LEA) Chapter 1 staff might work more effectively with test publishers, the Test Information Center (TIC-TAC) recently conducted a telephone survey of selected publishers of norm-referenced tests commonly used by Chapter 1 LEAs. The test publishers included: CTB/McGraw-Hill, The Psychological Corporation, The Riverside Publishing Company, and Science Research Asociates, Inc.

The survey focused on specific services test publishers provide LEA staff in: selecting tests and appropriate scoring services; minimizing turnaround time; verifying scoring reports; utilizing test administration results for instructional planning; and troubleshooting--who to contact when test related problems are experienced.

Results of the survey are reported here in a question-and-answer format. The specific questions, listed in the table of contents which follows, are grouped by topic:

- o test selection
- o test administration
- o selection, interpretation, and utilization of scoring reports
- o verification of scoring reports
- o coping with unexpected problems.

The questions and answers were reviewed for accuracy by the test publishers included in the survey. However, because of potential changes, it is recommended that LEA staff confirm factual information concerning test publishers' policies and/or procedures with regional sales representatives on an ongoing basis.

Terri Strand
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Test Selection

1. HOW DO TEST PUBISHFRS ASSIST LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES (LEAS) IN TEST SELECTION?

   Publishers provide test examination kits, on-site presentations by their regional sales representatives, and sometimes help in matching item objectives. Also, test publishers' catalogs which are published annually include current information about their respective tests and scoring services.

2. IS IT ACCEPTABLE FOR LEAS USING THE NORM-REFERENCED MODEL TO CHANGE TO ANOTHER NORM-REFERENCED TEST FOR THEIR POSTTEST ON THE BASIS OF EQUATING STUDIES CONDUCTED BY OTHER LEAS OR STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES (SEAS)?

   It has been reported that some test publishers' regional sales representatives have advised Chapter 1 LEA staff to use different tests for pretesting and posttesting, based on equating studies conducted elsewhere.

   In an equating study, two different tests are administered to a sample of students in order to obtain comparable scores. However, because of student population differences, results of equating studies are considered applicable only to the specific LEA or SEA for which the study was conducted. Also, although tests are equated statistically, they may not be correlated in content and may vary in number of test items.

   Information about conducting an equating study is available from the regional Technical Assistance Centers (TACs) for Chapter 1 Evaluation.

3. IF LEAS USE THE SAME NORM-REFERENCED TEST FOR PRETEST AND POSTTEST, WHEN CAN THEY CHANGE TO ANOTHER NORM-REFERENCED TEST THAT MAY BE MORE SUITABLE?

   LEAs which test in fall and spring may change tests in fall, at the beginning of the new evaluation cycle.

   Subject to SEA approval, Chapter 1 LEAs who test only once a year have several options:

3. (continued)

- Double test—administer the "old" test as the posttest to complete the previous evaluation cycle and administer the "new" test as a pretest to begin the new evaluation cycle.

- Administer the "new" test only and do not report evaluation for the year when the test is changed.

- Conduct an equating study of the "old" and "new" tests. Information about conducting an equating study is available from the regional Technical Assistance Centers (TACs) for Chapter 1 Evaluation.

Test Administration

4. SHOULD CHAPTER 1 LEAS ADMINISTER TESTS AT OFF-PEAK PERIODS (LATE FALL TO EARLY SPRING) TO GET FASTER DELIVERY OF SCORING REPORTS, AS SOME PUBLISHERS' SALES RESPRESENTATIVES HAVE SUGGESTED?

   Inasmuch as national norms are being used to compare the achievement of Chapter 1 students, LEAs should test at about the same time that the national norms groups were tested.

   With the norm referenced model, LEAs should test within two weeks before or after the norming midpoint reference date or within 3 - 6 weeks before or after the midpoint reference date, if interpolated norms are used.

   CTB/McGraw Hill advises that LEAs which test annually should use the same quarter-month for testing each year.

5. SOME CHAPTER 1 LEAS ARE UNABLE TO TEST WITHIN TWO WEEKS OF THE NORMING MIDPOINT REFERENCE DATES AND WOULD LIKE TO USE INTERPOLATED NORMS WITHIN THE ACCEPTABLE PERIOD OF TIME FOR THE NORM-REFERENCED MODEL. DO ALL TEST PUBLISHERS PROVIDE INTERPOLATED NORMS?

   CTB/McGraw-Hill, Riverside Publishing Company, and Psychological Corporation provide interpolated norms for many tests used for Chapter 1 evaluation. Also, Science Research Associates, Inc., will provide interpolated norms for their new achievement test battery—the Survey of Basic Skills as well as for the SRA Achievement Series which now has 1984 norms.

5. (continued)

LEAs which require interpolated norms should verify prior to establishing test administration dates that the publisher provides interpolated norms for the test being used. If not, procedures for calculating interpolated norms are available from the respective state departments of education and/or regional TACs, as appropriate.

Selection, Interpretation, and Utilization of Scoring Reports

6. HOW DO TEST PUBISHERS ASSIST LEAS IN SELECTING SCORING REPORTS?

Test publishers provide a variety of scoring reports that address many different information needs of districts: program evaluation, item and objective analyses, diagnostic information, instructional grouping, regrouping of students' spring test administration results for fall classroom placement, detailed statistical reports for administrators and school boards, parent-teacher conferencing, and cumulative record keeping. Also, scoring reports are available at different levels of reporting, including individual student, and class, grade, building, and district summaries.

Test publishers provide various services and/or publications designed to assist LEAs in selecting appropriate reports. These include:

- consultations by their regional sales representatives who assist LEA staff in defining their information needs and also, make recommendations for relevant scoring reports
- scoring packages designed to simplify ordering procedures—each scoring package includes a mix of scores and reports emphasizing different patterns of information needs
- inservice workshops by their regional sales representatives prior to test administrations and after scoring reports are received by LEAs
- publications about their scoring services and reports and/or packages of different sample scoring reports

6. (continued)

- o test catalogs, published annually, which contain current information about scoring services and examples of scoring reports.

LEA staff should check with publishers' regional sales representatives concerning the availability of specific scoring services, reports, and types of assistance they provide LEAs.

7. WHAT DO TEST PUBLISHERS RECOMMEND CONCERNING SELECTION OF SCORES BY CHAPTER 1 LEAS?

Scores are generally selected at the time that LEAs order their scoring service reports. In general, selection of appropriate scores depends on how the scores will be used as well as guidelines established by the SEA for submitting Chapter 1 evaluation data.

The major test publishers provide a full range of scores and publications which explain the use of the various scores and their relative advantages and disadvantages.

Frequently used scores for Chapter 1 evaluation include:

- o raw scores or number correct scores —used as the starting point in conducting quality control checks of evaluation data and for identifying floor and ceiling effects)
- o scaled scores or expanded standard scores--used for aggregating data, for functional level testing, and monitoring longitudinal achievement
- o national percentile ranks--for comparing achievement with national norms
- o normal curve equivalents (NCEs) —for calculating NCE gains.

Test publishers vary in their recommendations to Chapter 1 LEAs for selection of scores. For example, some test publishers may not encourage LEAs to select the number correct (raw score) for their reports. LEAs should be aware that this score is essential when verifying the accuracy of the data in quality control checks.

7. (continued)

CTB/McGraw-Hill most often recommends ordering scaled scores, national percentile ranks, and NCE scores. The Riverside Publishing Company encourages districts to select grade equivalent (GE) scores for the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) and scaled scores for the Tests of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP), national percentile ranks and NCE scores. However, LEAs are able to order scaled scores for the ITBS.

For users of the Stanford Achievement Test or the Metropolitan Achievement Tests, the Psychological Corporation recommends using the Pupil Skills Analysis report which provides both norm-referenced scores (including raw scores, scaled scores, national percentile ranks and stanines, grade equivalents, and NCE scores) and objective referenced scores. For users of the Stanford Diagnostic Reading and Mathematics Tests, the publisher recommends the basic service which provides norm-referenced scores (raw scores, scaled scores, national percentile ranks and stanines, grade equivalents, and NCE scores) and mastery scores (Progress Indicators) for specific skills as well as instructional starting points.

Science Research Associates, Inc. recommends selecting its scaled score (GSV), national percentile and stanine, and NCE. The publisher's List Report (the basic report that is furnished to all schools) automatically includes grade equivalent scores in addition to the above scores but provides LEAs with the opportunity to suppress them on their scoring reports.

8. HOW SHOULD LEAS ORDER INTERPOLATED NORMS FROM THE TEST PUBLISHER'S SCORING SERVICE?

Interpolated norms should be requested when scoring services are ordered. After test administration, materials shipped to the publisher should also indicate the test administration dates.

LEAs ordering interpolated norms for CAT or CTBS should not request the specific quarter-month norms (no longer included in the publisher's catalog) but rather should enter the actual testing dates on the order form. It is recommended that LEAs verify which quarter-month norms were used in the scoring report.

9. WHAT SERVICES DO TEST PUBLISHERS PROVIDE LEAS IN INTERPRETING SCORING REPORTS?

Some publishers provide supplementary test publications which include detailed information for interpreting scoring reports and/or will provide an inservice workshop, upon LEA request.

10. HOW CAN LEAS RESOLVE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH TESTING WITHIN THE APPROPRIATE PERIODS OF TIME FOR THE NORM-REFERENCED EVALUATION MODEL BUT NOT BEING ABLE TO GET SCORING REPORTS BACK IN TIME FOR INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING?

According to test publishers, turnaround time (the date completed test booklets and answer sheets are received by the test publisher or scoring service and the date when scoring reports are shipped) generally ranges from two to three weeks (10-15 working days).

Delays in receipt of scoring reports by districts are often related to practices followed by districts in preparing and shippping test administration materials. Some common causes of delays include:

- o order forms are not properly completed

  LEA staff often have to complete many unfamiliar order forms. The order forms should be completed carefully and verified to avoid any unecessary delays. Delays can result from omissions on the order forms for desired services, scores, and norms.

- o testing dates are not reported

  Test administration dates should be recorded on all documents, as requested by the publisher. When test administration dates are missing, the publisher has to telephone or write to the LEA to obtain the information before scoring can be done.

- o wrong time of year of testing is reported

- o wrong test form is reported

- o wrong grade is reported

- o wrong answer sheets are used

10. (continued)

- o answer sheets are not filled out properly

  Children should use appropriate No. 2 pencils for marking answer sheets and should not use colored pencils or ball-point pens.

  Children may fill in the answer sheets improperly or occasionally may doodle on their answer sheets —sometimes over critical areas such as timing tracks.

  Stray marks on answer sheets can cause delays in processing time. Children's answer sheets should be checked and stray and extraneous marks erased.

- o photocopied answer sheets are used

  Photocopied answer sheets cannot be processed by the scoring service and should not be used.

- o classes are mixed up when packaged and materials are not packed properly

  The publisher's detailed instructions for batching materials for shipping should be carefully followed. ID sheets are used to identify the building, grade, and class. Delays may be created by ID sheets not being inserted or completed properly or photocopies being used.

10. (continued)

- o materials are not shipped properly

  Delays are sometimes created by LEA staff sending incomplete shipments or not marking the boxes of materials sent to the scoring service. Boxes may become separated during shipment and the publisher's staff can't tell if the entire shipment was received. The publisher suggests marking boxes "1 of —, 2 of —, etc."

- o there are delays in returning answer sheets

  Schools may delay shipment to scoring service for absentee children. This may vary from one to two days or for weeks if there is a chicken pox or flu epidemic.

Verification of Scoring Reports

11. IS IT ADVISABLE FOR LEAS TO VERIFY THE ACCURACY OF THEIR SCORING REPORTS? ... IS IT NECESSARY TO VERIFY EACH STUDENT'S TEST SCORES?

Errors on scoring reports may result from various factors relating to the ways in which the LEA submitted materials to the publisher (for example, time of year or year reported on header sheets is inaccurate, students were given the wrong answer sheet to complete, etc.) or in actual data processing.

LEA staff should verify the scoring reports to ensure the reliability of the LEA's Chapter 1 evaluation results. In a small district, LEA staff may wish to verify each student's score, whereas in a large district, LEA staff may sample students' scores, for example, check every tenth score.

11. (continued)

In verifying scoring reports, LEAs should check that:

- scores are reported for the correct grade level, test level, and test form.
- score conversions (RS-SS, SS-PR, and PR-NCE) are correct for the correct test level and form when empirical norms were used (test was administered 2-4 weeks on either side of the norms midpoint reference date).
- score conversions (RS-SS, SS-PR, and PR-NCE) are correct for interpolated norms (when the test was administered from 3-6 weeks beyond the norms midpoint reference date.
- score conversions (RS-SS) are correct when students in the same grade were administered different functional level tests.

12. HOW CAN LEAS VERIFY THE ACCURACY OF SCORING REPORTS FOR TESTS ADMINISTERED FROM 3 - 6 WEEKS BEYOND THE MIDPOINT REFERENCE DATE?

CTB/McGraw-Hill provides books of interpolated norms tables for CAT and computer-generated interpolated norms tables (SS to PR or NCE) for CTBS (for both Number Correct and IRT scaled scores). LEAs may request the appropriate norms table from the publisher. There are no score conversion tables for Number Correct to IRT scaled scores which can only be obtained from the publisher's scoring service.

The Riverside Publishing Company provides interpolated NCE scores as a scoring option for Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests, ITBS/TAP, and The 3-R's Test.

The Psychological Corporation routinely provides the appropriate interpolated norms tables to districts which request interpolated norms from the publisher's scoring service.

Science Research Associates, Inc. provides interpolated norms as a scoring option. Both empirical and interpolated norms appear on the scoring report.

13. HOW CAN LEAS WHICH TESTED CHAPTER 1 STUDENTS IN THE SAME GRADE WITH BOTH IN-LEVEL AND OUT-OF-LEVEL TESTS VERIFY THAT THE SCORING SERVICE USED APPROPRIATE NORMS IN CALCULATING NCE AVERAGES?

LEAs should check that the publisher provides for scoring mixed test levels administered to students in the same grade. Mixed test levels for the same grade are batched together and during scoring, the scanner identifies the test level used by each student in the class and scores the answer sheet appropriately. The test level administered to each student appears on the scoring report.

14. WHAT PROCEDURES DO TEST PUBLISHERS USE TO DERIVE AVERAGE NCES?

Test publishers use different procedures for obtaining average NCEs and sometimes the publisher may change procedures.

At the present time, Riverside Publishing Company and Science Research Associates average individual NCE scores; CTB/McGraw-Hill converts average scaled scores to the corresponding NCE scores; and Psychological Corporation converts average scaled scores to national percentiles and then to NCEs.

15. DO TEST PUBLISHERS HAVE QUALITY CONTROL PROCEDURES FOR VERIFYING THEIR SCORE REPORTS? ... IF SO, CAN ERRORS STILL OCCUR ON THE SCORING REPORTS?

The major test publishers reported using several human and machine quality control checks: verifying order forms and materials when they arrive from the district, screening answer sheets, verifying scanner results, and inspecting reports for irregularities. Most publishers reported better than 99 percent accuracy of scoring reports. However, scoring errors may occur even though the error rate is small.

16. LEAS OCCASIONALLY FIND ERRORS WHEN VERIFYING THEIR SCORING REPORTS. WHO CAN THEY REPORT THIS TO AND HOW DO TEST PUBLISHERS HANDLE SUCH ERRORS?

Test publishers suggested that if LEAs think they have identified errors in their scoring reports, they should first contact the publisher's regional sales representative. Sometimes the LEA may have used an incorrect score conversion table to verify data.

16. (continued)

CTB/McGraw-Hill suggests that LEA staff who have identified errors in their scoring reports contact Customer Services in Monterey (800/538-9547 or in California 800/682-9222). LEAs calling in will be connected will the appropriate consultant. The product manager or Statistical Services staff are most often consulted for problems relating to scoring.

The Psychological Corporation suggested that most problems identified by LEA staff could be resolved by telephone. The publisher provides a hotline number (216/826-2879) for LEAs to use if they suspect that there are errors in their reports. Also, the publisher maintains a terminal in the Cleveland office that is used to track scoring reports.

At other publishers' offices, LEA staff should contact Customer Services, advise them of the problem being experienced, and request to speak to the person who can help them. The telephone number for Riverside Publishing Company is 800/323-9540 or 312/693-0040 in Illinois, Hawaii, or Alaska, and for Science Research Associates, Inc., is 312/984-7000.

Publishers CTB/McGraw-Hill, Riverside Publishing Company, Psychological Corporation, and Science Research Associates, Inc. each indicated that, in the case of errors, the publisher would check the answer sheets and rerun the data as necessary.

17. HOW LONG AFTER SCORING DO TEST PUBLISHERS KEEP COMPLETED TEST BOOKLETS AND SCORING SHEETS?

Currently, CTB/McGraw-Hill keeps materials for 60 days unless they are requested by the LEA. The publisher keeps data on tape for three years.

The Riverside Publishing Company keeps answer documents for three months and data tapes for 13 months.

The Psychological Corporation keeps materials for about 13 months.

Science Research Associates, Inc. keeps materials for 45 days after reports are mailed. Thus, LEAs have 30 days after they receive their reports to request return of their materials.

18. SOME LEAS WOULD LIKE TO HAVE STUDENTS' TEST BOOKLETS AND ANSWER SHEETS RETURNED TO THEM. DO TEST PUBLISHERS PROVIDE THIS SERVICE? ... WHEN SHOULD LEAS REQUEST THIS SERVICE? ... HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO RECEIVE THE MATERIALS? ... ARE THERE ANY CHARGES?

CTB/McGraw-Hill, Riverside Publishing Company, Psychological Corporation, and Science Research Associates, Inc. indicated that they do provide this service.

Districts should request this service on their order form for scoring reports. Publishers mail the materials by UPS or fourth class mail a few days after the scoring reports are mailed. Thus, districts will receive the materials about 3 - 4 weeks after they receive their scoring reports.

Districts are required to pay postage charges. Currently, some publishers do not charge any handling fee for the service while others may require a nominal amount.

Coping with Unexpected Problems

19. WHO SHOULD LEA STAFF CONTACT WHEN THEY EXPERIENCE UNEXPECTED PROBLEMS, SUCH AS: DELAYS OR ERRORS IN SHIPMENT, INCORRECT SCORING REPORTS, OR OTHER TYPES OF PROBLEMS AND ARE UNABLE TO CONTACT THE PUBLISHER'S REGIONAL SALES REPRESENTATIVE, OR ARE DISSATISFIED WITH THE REPRESENTATIVES'S SERVICES?

CTB/McGraw-Hill advises LEAs to call Customer Services in their regional office or Monterey. The publisher's staff is trained to answer questions, interpret test scores, and can determine who to contact to resolve specific problems. Currently, the publisher provides a special answering service in Monterey designed to expedite LEAs' telephone requests for consultations concerning specific problems.

The Psychological Corporation suggested that LEA staff contact Customer Services in the publisher's regional offices to resolve any problem relating to misshipment of materials or problems relating to test administration (ask to speak to the Administrative Assistant). District staff may also call the publisher's telephone hotline number to get help in completing their orders for scoring services, obtain an explanation of a scoring option, ask for correction of scoring service, request special scoring services, check progress on their scoring orders, or get help in interpretation of scoring reports.

19. (continued)

The Riverside Publishing Company advises LEA staff to call Customer Services where they will be referred to the appropriate staff member. The director of marketing responds to questions concerning late delivery of test materials or dissatisfaction with the regional sales representative's services and the director of testing responds to questions relating to test content.

Science Research Associates, Inc. advises that LEA staff contact Customer Services who will identify the appropriate staff member to consult with. The director of testing and his staff or the scoring services facilitator will also respond to a variety of questions regarding scoring services and interpretation of reports.